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The Guru's Grace is all I Need –
~~All I want is the Grace of the Guru~~ –

To the usual query from Shri Maharaj, a Bengali visitor, from Calcutta, gave the relevant information about himself. He was the symbol of the "middle way"; everything about him was what could be described as "average" – average height & weight, nothing distinctive about his features or mode of talking. He said he had been interested in Vedaanta ever since he could remember; he had seen and met almost every known "Saint" and very many others who were not too well-known. (Shri Maharaj smiled when this was translated to him). He had read and studied all the known Upanishads, ~~various~~ commentaries on the 'Gita' by various scholars and saints in Bengali, Hindi and English. He was also a student of the Sanskrit language, and therefore had the good fortune to have gone through many works in the original Sanskrit. He felt that all he needed now was "the Guru's Grace"; he had read "I Am That" and was so impressed that he has selected Shri Maharaj as his Guru and would not leave Bombay without Shri Maharaj's Grace – there was a time limit within which Shri Maharaj must bestow that Grace because his leave would expire on a particular date and he had booked his return ticket by a certain train on a certain day! This time, Shri Maharaj apparently could not restrain a very broad smile.

Shri Maharaj – I would like to ask you something.

Visitor – Yes Sir. (He pushed out his chest and answered with the great confidence of a well prepared examinee, facing an examiner)

Shri Maharaj – You have read so many books, met so many Jnyaanis, over a long period of time, and you must have located your true identity. Tell me, what is your true identity as far as you yourself are concerned?

Visitor – Sir, I am a simple Saadhaka, seeking enlightenment and have come to you with great confidence that you will not refuse me this wish of mine.

Shri M. – You still have quite a few days here, there is plenty of time for enlightenment. Let us first find out who it is that wants enlightenment – indeed, let us find out whether there is any need at all for enlightenment, or Freedom, or Moksha or whatever else. Now let me have an answer to my question: have you located your own identity as far as you are concerned – forget for the moment, the world and the God and the Guru.

Visitor – This is a very awkward question, Sir. All I want is the Grace of the Guru, without which the door will not open.

Shri M. – But should we not find out first whether there is at all a door barring your entry, entry to into what? You keep talking of the Guru? What is your idea of the Guru? You see, unless these basic questions are answered to your own satisfaction, how can you proceed. Therefore, I repeat: Have you been able, after so many years study, to find out your own identity, you who are seeking Guru's Grace in order to get Salvation.

Visitor – Sir, all I can say is that you are making me very confused. All I can say in answer to your question is: I don't know.

Shri M. – Ah, now we are getting somewhere. "I don't know" – no one has ever spoken words truer than these three words. That is the only truth, everything else is false.

Visitor – Sir, I think you are making fun of me. But the look on your face suggests that you were never more serious about anything.

Shri M. – Now, please try to understand. You have done quite a bit of reading and you should apprehend what I am saying. Try and, for a moment forget all that have accumulated by way of knowledge, and try to see what I am getting at, with an empty mind, – remember, an empty mind.

Whatever the state is when we did not know - that is our true state, that is Reality. In that state, I did not even know my existence. Then, spontaneously, came the message or the knowledge I AM. This knowledge I AM started the sense of duality. Whatever was before the knowledge I AM was TRUTH, whatever is subsequent to the knowledge or consciousness I AM is FALSE. Understand this basic fact. It is this I-am-ness, the sense of being, which has been given various names like Maya, Prakriti, Eashwara, etc. but nevertheless, it is an illusion, pure ignorance. It is this Prakriti with the help of the conceptual Purusha - both constituting the Parenthood principle - that creates the world and peoples it with innumerable forms, each being the food of some other form. And it is the dreamer who creates this dream world as a manifestation and takes on the roles of the millions of dream figures. It is this Maya in action which makes the Consciousness, which gives sentience to the sentient being, mistakenly believe that it is itself the particular form - it assumes the identity of the particular form, and forgets its true nature. Are you with me so far? Any questions?

Visitor - Yes Sir, I am following you single-mindedly. No questions.

Shri M. - Good. So far in this process is there any question of an entity with independent existence? You are That-Which-Is prior to the arrival of this I-AM-ness. What has come upon your true nature is like an illness or an eclipse which has a certain length of time, at the end of which the physical form will "die" and will be buried or cremated and will thereafter mingle with the five elements of which it was made. The breath will disappear and mingle with the air outside the body; the consciousness will be freed of the limitation of the body. The process will have

reached its allotted end. Now then, let us come back to the problem: who is it that needs the Guru's Grace in order to attain what liberation from what bondage?!

Visitor: Shri Maharaj, you have turned the problem around 180°. You have reduced all my labours of 40 years to a zero. And you have nullified my very existence. You have liquidated me! What can I say? The only thing is that in liquidating me, you have also liquidated the Guru!!

Shri M. Not quite - although that is not a bad reaction. Now listen further.

The trouble is that you look upon yourself as an individual entity with a form, and you also look upon the Guru as an individual entity with form but something in his head and heart which makes him an enlightened person, but nonetheless a person. This is the real mistake, because the Guru has realised that he is the ultimate Reality and he sees every being like himself.

The other mistake is that the disciple, as an entity expects to learn and understand something. But how can a conceptual object understand anything? In reality what happens is that the understanding gradually makes the seeker, the Saadhaka disappear. The individuality of the seeker, the Vyaktitva, gradually disappears. But in the process, the Guru's Grace which is always present, like the shining Sun, becomes one with the consciousness. The more quickly the identification with the body is lost, the more quickly the Guru's Grace will flower in the disciple. And then he will realise that the Guru is none other than the Consciousness within, and it is this Consciousness, when pleased with the faith and love of the disciple, that unfolds all the knowledge that is necessary.

There cannot however, be any progress if you continue to regard yourself as an entity and expect the Guru, as another entity, to give you some home work to do and then, when that is duly completed, to give you a sort of certificate, or something on a platter as "liberation". The whole concept such as this is misconceived. You must realise the true significance of the Guru and his Grace. You must see your true nature and then the Guru's Grace is there in abundance!